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CHAPTER NEWS JULY 1977

Volunteers: Key To Protection

by Bob Winterbottom

As a result of its efforts to protect Maine's natural areas, conserve natural features in Maine, and preserve biological diversity, the Maine Chapter of The Nature Conservancy now holds title to 57 different parcels of land, totaling roughly 7000 acres. Land ownership carries with it the responsibility of stewardship--caring for the land as a resource. Ownership of 57 parcels having different ecological qualities and different use potentials and constraints implies something other than a single, rigid formula for stewardship.

One of the long term goals of the Conservancy is to foster an enduring land ethic among the public. Conservancy is striving to not only acquire and protect land, but also to search out and encourage committed land stewards. Without its volunteer stewardship committees, TNC cannot protect the land it now owns, nor can it hope to establish working examples of the ideals inherent in a "land ethic". Active volunteer preserve management committees are needed to meet both our short term objectives of land preservation and our long term goals of land stewardship.

In brief, the Conservancy stewardship program seeks to preserve the ecological integrity of the land, and to identify those land uses compatible with protection of the land. This program is charted out and translated into action in the preserve master plan. Two steps are especially critical in the development of a master plan. First, regardless of size, uniqueness, complexity of uses, or other characteristics, the Conservancy must, for each preserve, consider why the land is being preserved. Articulation of these objectives of preservation provides a direction and consistency. Without a clear statement of these objectives in the master plan, it is difficult, if not impossible, to resolve conflicts between preservation and use. Secondly, the Conservancy must evaluate what non-destructive uses can or should be sustained on the preserve. The challenge of this task can only be met if there exists a complete inventory of the preserve's natural features.

Some of the preserves such as Crystal Bog, are of regional or even national ecological significance, and are recognized as "Critical Areas" by the State Planning Office, or "National Natural Landmarks" by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Conservancy has in these cases assumed the heavy responsibility of protecting natural elements which are not to be found elsewhere, and as a consequence, are of inestimable value. Their management must include an assessment of their vulnerability to disturbance or resistance to degradation. The Crystal Bog Committee, under the chairmanship of Sally Rooney of Ricker College in Houlton, is energetically engaged in studying existing information and adding to it where necessary in order to be able to complete such an assessment. The committee will then be in a better position to judge what limited scientific uses may be compatible with the primary objective of preservation.

Other preserves, such as Damariscove Island (Boothbay) and Douglas Mountain (Sebago) are unique because of their natural attributes which would be lost if they were intensively impacted or developed. Historical uses, topographic settings, and aesthetic qualities make them regionally important natural resources, more than the rareness of their flora or habitat type.

The Damariscove Island Committee, working



Stewardship Committee on Damariscove Island

continued

The Nature Conservancy

under the leadership of Paul Ring and Charlie Gould, is conscious of both the uniqueness of the preserve, and the large number of visitors which are attracted to the island. They are currently exploring how TNC might permit continued reasonable uses and still meet its fundamental stewardship goal of land protection.

Still other Conservancy preserves, such as Osborn-Finch (Waldoboro), Eustis Preserve (Georgetown-Five Island), Bass Rock Preserve (Bristol), and Redin's Island Preserve (Kennebunkport) are important links in a chain of protected, relatively undeveloped lands, rather than being distinguished by uncommon ecological characteristics. These, and other preserves similar to them, are often locally significant as points of access to the shoreline, as areas offering the delights of birdwatching, nature photography or quiet walks, and as sites for environmental education programs and well supervised natural history outings. Their management might identify some of these potential uses, acknowledge them as being compatible, and specify how they need to be monitored.

Generally, a preserve can be categorized as predominantly one or another type of preserve, which then implies primary and secondary uses. A rare ecosystem type would imply few, if any, uses except preservation. An open space type preserve would imply more educational and passive recreational uses. A committee will sometimes suggest that several stewardship objectives can be met without conflict; in other words, multiple uses of the preserve may not be mutually exclusive.

Having a master plan drafted and on paper, with identified protection objectives and guidelines for use, may assist the committee in

obtaining exemption from local property taxes, yet another obligation that the Conservancy often assumes with ownership of a preserve.

One could discuss at length the varied nature of our stewardship responsibilities on TNC preserves, however, it soon becomes obvious that more than a discussion of those responsibilities is needed. The Conservancy cannot take the best possible care of its preserve by only inventorying the natural features of a preserve, documenting the objectives for its preservation, and suggesting appropriate uses. Chapter stewardship is utterly dependent on the existence of active, enthusiastic Preserve Management Committees whose members are locally involved in the community which includes the preserve. A plan can guide judgments, can provide information for decisions, and can efficiently schedule the implementation of protection measures, but the plan works only as well as the committee which drafts it, reworks it, and makes use of it. Building strong committees who can develop and implement a stewardship plan for Conservancy preserves is the key to their long term protection.



Bob Winterbottom is working for the Maine Chapter for 6 months under a grant from the Charles Mott Foundation primarily responsible for developing master plans on several of the preserves, and working closely with the volunteer stewardship committees which manage them.

...from the chair

One of the little known tasks of the Chapter chairman is signing thank you cards for dues and contributions. Periodically, a fat envelope arrives in the mail, sent by Ann Marston who has kept track of incoming funds, prepared a reporting list which goes to Arlington, Virginia, with copies to the Chapter treasurer and chairman, and typed up the names on the cards, as well as placed the addresses and stamps on the envelopes. All I have to do is sign, stuff, lick and mail. The other morning, I timed myself on a batch of 41, representing almost \$2,000 in funds, some of it dues, more of it contributions to Chapter operations or specific projects. It took just over 15 minutes. Because the mechanics are so simple, there is plenty of time for reflection on the Chapter and what makes it tick.

Obviously, The Nature Conservancy exists because so many of you feel a deep need and commitment to the preservation of natural areas. In the face of development pressures of every sort, the key to preservation is organization. And with organization comes complexity, which in turn generates more complexity. The jump from watching young ospreys learning to fly, or a creche of eider ducklings, to wrestling

with budgets, the need to raise funds, or the mechanics of saying thanks to you who give those funds is really not so great.

It's the personal commitment which makes TNC and the Maine Chapter a success. It's everyone, from the staff who put in long hours at low pay, to the trustees who meet monthly to exercise judgment on difficult questions, to Ann Marston who volunteers her time on an essential part of the fund raising process, to you who keep those contributions coming -- and coming -- and coming, who add up to something which works.

We cannot, of course, ever rest. The need for income is constant. You are asked to give, and your thanks for the gift is to be asked to give again. There is no getting around it, and it will always be that way.

I wish that instead of a card, it were possible to thank each of you in person for your support. Obviously, this is not possible. So, in addition to the cards, we are trying to do it another way - by doing the best job we possibly can in acquiring and managing those natural areas which, left undisturbed, mean so much to all of us.

Clinton B. Townsend

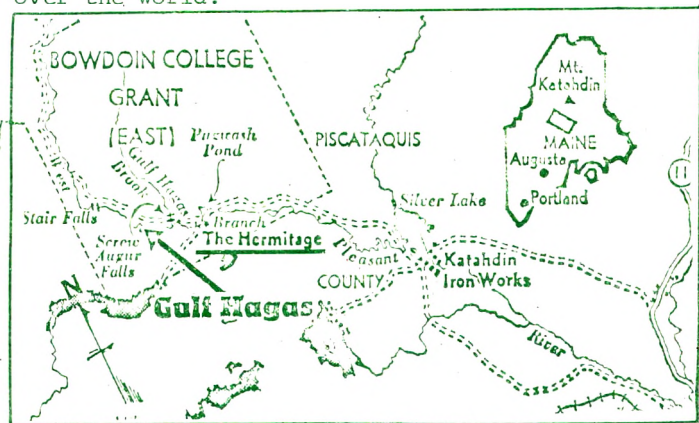
CLINTON B. TOWNSEND
Chairman

The Hermitage Designated Natural Landmark

In late spring, word was received that the Hermitage had been designated by the Department of the Interior as a National Natural Landmark. The preserve, which includes one of the last remaining stands of old growth White Pine in New England, lies in Northern Maine, just west of the Katahdin Iron Works, overlooking the West Branch of the Pleasant River.

It is recognized as having "national significance illustrating the natural heritage of the United States". Its pines, over 120 feet tall, have been uncut for at least the last 100 years. The largest measures 36" dbh. Near the southern portion of the 35 acre preserve, mature growth Hemlock predominates. The small Pugwash Pond lies in the east with a narrow rim of sphagnum bog surrounding it. It occasionally houses beaver.

The Hermitage is the third Conservancy area in Maine to achieve this national status. Crystal Bog in Crystal and Sherman, and the Colby Marston Bog in Belgrade (now transferred to Colby College) have been previously recognized. It is, perhaps, ironic that so few of the majestic trees now remain in a state which calls itself the Pine Tree State. Maine's tall pines, marked with the Kings Broad Arrow were once prized as masts, and carried clipper sails all over the world.



The Hermitage

One of the early residents of the Hermitage was a redhaired Scot who built the first cabin there in the 1880's. His solitary existence there caused the name which has continued long after he moved on. Conservancy acquired the Hermitage in 1968 from Mrs. Sara Green, known locally as "the Mayor". Mrs. Green was a key figure in the Katahdin Iron Works community for many years. She lived at the Hermitage, which she acquired in 1941, and ran hunting camps. Though the area was heavily logged--indeed log drives came down the Pleasant River--she held a special attachment to the grove of tall pines and they were not cut. After Conservancy took ownership, the cabins were removed.

The region is interesting historically and naturally. Gulf Hagas, the deep gorge of the Pleasant River, lies about 3/4 mile from the

Hermitage. It was named a National Natural Landmark in 1969. Katahdin Iron Works, active in iron ore mining until the 1880's, is now a State Historic Site. The Appalachian Trail crosses over the Hermitage Preserve.

This summer, a caretaker program for the Appalachian Trail is based at the Hermitage; a cooperative project of the Maine Appalachian Trail Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Student Conservation Program. *(The preserve is open to the public, approachable either by the Appalachian Trail or through the lumber company road at Katahdin Iron Works. A gate fee is charged.)*



2 Preserves Nominated For Critical Areas Registry

Two Conservancy areas have received preliminary nomination by the State Critical Areas Advisory Board as Critical Areas. Both are island sites of heron rookeries.

Stone Island in Outer Machias Bay is a rocky steep island covered with a dense mature growth of fir, white spruce and yellow birch. A large great blue heron rookery occupies a portion of the island, containing over 80 nests.

Mark Island in Penobscot Bay has some 30 nests. A thin band of white spruce grows along the shore, but the island is mostly hardwood.

In the evaluation, the report notes that the great blue heron approaches the northern extent of its breeding range in Maine. Moreover, Maine is the only New England state to support breeding colonies. Because of the nature of both, visitors are not encouraged, particularly during breeding season in April and May.



In Search Of Diversity

"In Search of Diversity", TNC's slide program on the Maine Chapter, will be ready for distribution in early August. Produced by Jim Lannon and Craig Stevens of North Haven and Rockport respectively, the program will enable the Chapter staff and trustees to more effectively get out the word to the public on the Maine Chapter's efforts in Maine. It was made possible through contributions made in memory of Lois M. Thurston, former Chapter Secretary and trustee.

If you can help us in this effort by setting up a program with a group you are involved with, let us know. The only way we can continue to protect new areas and manage the ones we have is through a broadened membership and base of support. We need your help in telling others about TNC! (Call or write TNC, 51 Chapel Street, Augusta, Maine 04330, 622-3101.)



STEWARDSHIP

Watchful Committees Vital



SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO MONITOR I-95

Under the Department of Transportation, a special Advisory Committee has been set up to monitor the development of the Interstate as it passes adjacent to Crystal Bog in Aroostook County. Concern by Conservancy over possible effects to this National Natural Landmark led to the establishment of the Committee. Ailene Rogers, Chapter Trustee, is a member of the Committee, along with a DOT biologist and a geologist and DOT design engineers, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife biologists, and adjacent landowners. DOT has established a buffer zone around the Bog, where it will restrict use by the contractor building the road. It has also set up stringent conditions for the contractor to follow, for example, the removal of gravel from adjacent eskers. Recently, the Committee visited the site to look at the areas from which gravel materials would be taken and to review the methods for their removal, and also to determine the effects of these operations on the Bog and wildlife management of the area.

Mrs. Rogers commented following the trip that she felt that the Department of Transportation had conducted a very thorough trip. "They have shown a great deal of preparation and diligence in their concern for the protection of Crystal Bog", she said.

CONCERN FOR MILL COVE

The Chapter trustees and the Mill Cove Stewardship Committee are keeping a close eye on an encroachment onto the Mill Cove Preserve in South Portland. At question is a jetty, built for the adjacent marina onto the tidal flats which make up a large portion of Conservancy's 33 acre preserve. As noted in its natural resource inventory, tidal flats are an integral and valuable part of coastal ecosystems. TNC is particularly concerned that this resource be protected, and Stewardship Committee Chairman, Richard Dodge, Jr., and his committee are working together with the Chapter counsel Ed Richardson and Chapter staff to ensure that the protection is maintained.

Annual Meeting
July 29
Kennebunkport

Reservations must be received by July 25 for field trips and luncheon. Call or write the office today.

TRIPS

MID COAST AUDUBON SPONSORS
TRIP TO TNC PRESERVE

An all day trip to Popham Beach and the Morse Mountain Area, which will focus on beach erosion. Led by Dr. L. Kenneth Fink, Associate Professor of Oceanography at the University of Maine. It will begin at 9:00 AM at the Darling Center in Walpole, by a slide program on beach erosion, followed by a visit to Popham Beach in Phippsburg and Morse Mountain Area adjacent to Popham, (recently protected by conservation easement to The Nature Conservancy.) For reservations, contact Herb Somers (372-6688). (Moderately strenuous.)

GOOD READING

The Unfinished Agenda - The Citizens Policy Guide to Environmental Issues, Thomas Crowell, 1977.

This task force report sponsored by the Rockefeller Brothers fund is good, though-provoking reading. TNC's Jon Roush was one of the 13 participants in the task force.

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Comments and contributions of articles are welcome.

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